

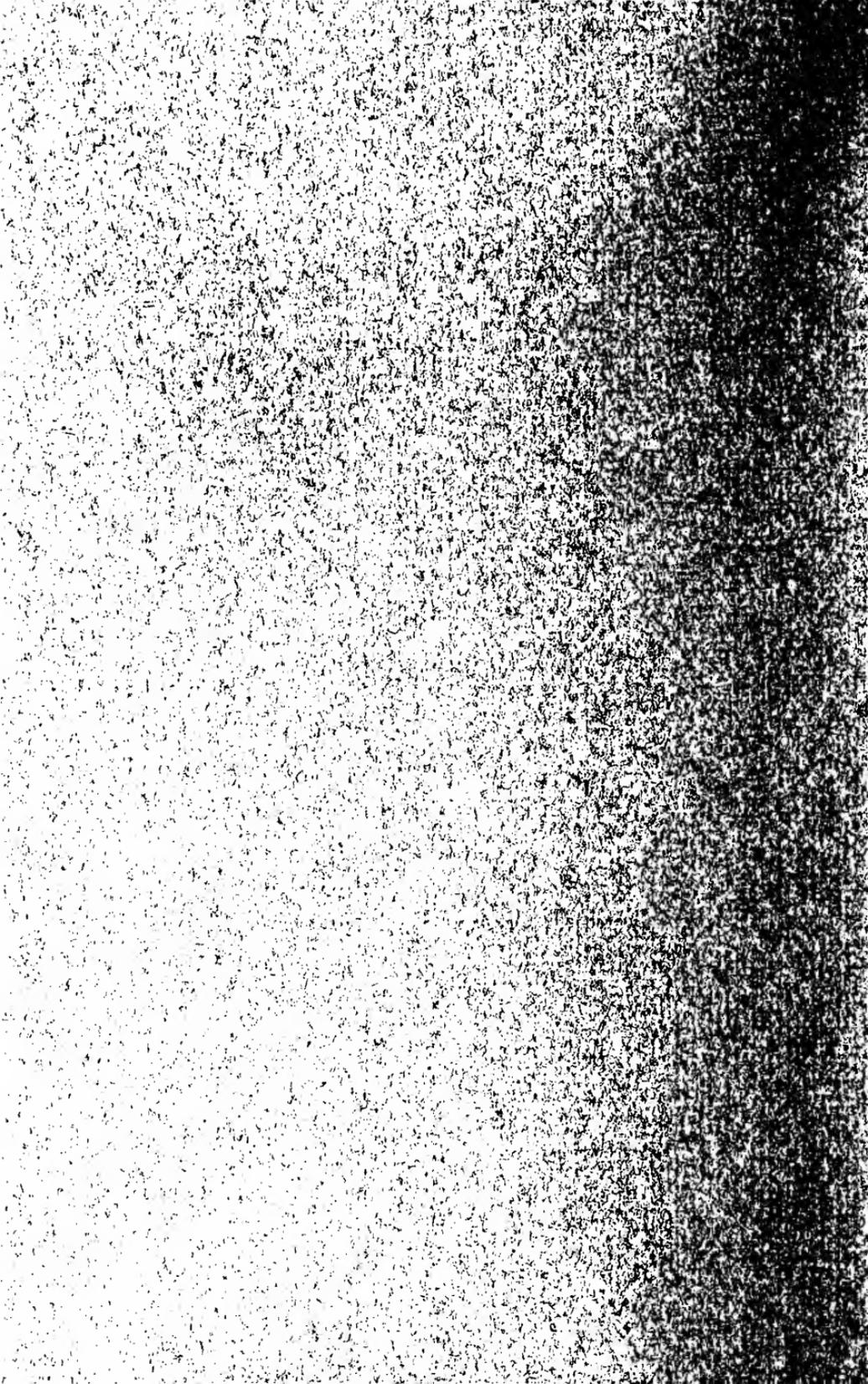
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# A WOMAN'S RELIQUARY

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A WOMAN'S RELIQUARY



THE CUALA PRESS  
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Three hundred copies of this  
book have been printed.

## EDITOR'S NOTE

A reviewer not long since congratulated me on the possession of some interesting manuscripts, which, as a snapper-up of unconsidered trifles, I have had the good fortune to come across. Some years ago I purchased a handful of books from a lady, now dead, and among them a slender morocco-bound volume containing the verses which here I print. She told me that she was the only surviving relation, a niece of the writer of these poems. 'You may do what you please with them,' she said; 'the writer and the person addressed are both dead; the marriage was childless.' No wrong therefore can be done to anyone by the present publication. A sequence of a hundred love lyrics addressed to a wife is perhaps too much for the general public; but possibly some of the verses may ultimately find their way into anthologies. My task as editor has been that of securing an accurate text; and, for convenience of reference, I have prefixed a title to each poem, which however may be disregarded by a reader of the sequence. The general title 'A Woman's Reliquary' is written on the first page of the manuscript.

Edward Dowden.

### *Publishers note.*

*If readers desire to attribute authorship of this book to the editor, no wrong is done to anyone.*

The secret may be whispered in the shrine,  
Life's central word, or cried in all men's ears  
Down from the mountain height, it yet is mine:  
— He only who had heard the secret hears.

## THE ROSARY

The beads thus at your girdle hung  
 Have little lustre as you see,  
 My verses faintly said or sung,  
 A poor believer's rosary.

Yet think for what they stand, nor part  
 With these, if only coloured clay;  
 This meant an *Ave* from his heart,  
 And this, though pale, a *Gloria*.

## SONG A SHADOW

The little breezes of my song  
 Waft perfumes, each a pallid wraith  
 Of hope, of memories treasured long,  
 And ever love, and ever faith:

Or think them shadows that across  
 The everlasting hills have run,  
 Whose life was merely sunshine's loss;  
 Yet flying shades confess the sun.

III

SILENCE AND SPEECH

Others, with desolate arms, have flung  
Their hands to heaven, and cried their grief,  
And found, because a woe was sung,  
Sad measured fragments of relief.

If such my lot, these lips were dumb;  
Song were a broken, idle toy;  
Lean to me, my beloved; come,  
And hear what may be told of joy.

IV

A GARDEN INCLOSED

My soul a garden is inclosed,  
But never wall was builded there  
Save heaven's bright boundary circumposed,  
The depths of blue untrammell'd air.

No garth is guarded half so sure,  
And here are blossoms for the bee,  
And here, to make my bourne secure,  
Horizons of infinity.

## V

## THE WELL

I stoop'd to many streams that run  
Through the hot plain, and drank with greed,  
Lores and new lores! — yet found not one  
But left some smatch of marish-weed.

Blest be this well that holds the heaven  
Radiant and calm within its breast!  
Who stoopeth here to him is given  
Joy at the midmost heart of rest.

## VI

## AFAR

I saw you then how far away,  
As one might see at morning's birth  
Some Oread of strange hills at play  
On the uplifted rim of earth;

Nothing beyond you but the light  
Of dawn and heaven's pellucid shell;  
So with God's world, swung clear of night,  
How should not all be safe and well?

VII

PREMONITIONS

Auroral pulses; quiverings  
Too faint to flush the pallid East;  
Nor yet the stir of earliest wings;  
But morn awakens, night has ceased.

Dreams and the phantoms of the dark  
Troop earthwards; see, across the lawn  
A light breath lifts the leaves, and hark !  
The alleluias of the dawn.

VIII

BUD AND BLOSSOM

O sweet and blind commotion of the sap  
When the first ray thrills in the folded flower !  
Virginal rapture tremulous; some great hap  
Befallen; a law declared; a quickening power.

And henceforth life shall surely have a part  
In all that joy which makes the many One;  
The petals sever; the whole scented heart  
Lies naked for encounter with the sun.

## IX

## THE HAVEN

It was not love, but o'er the array  
 Of maiden faces clustering there  
 My glance careered, which well might stay,  
 For this was frank and that was fair.

No haven for my sail that drove,  
 No pharos; sunniest isles I passed;  
 Then suddenly — it was not love —  
 The haven, and an anchor cast.

## X

## MANNA

I lived on manna day and night,  
 So long ! and still could live indeed;  
 Nor murmured that such bread was light,  
 My heaven-sent coriander-seed;

I lived on manna night and day,  
 No other food I craved or knew;  
 Without my tent each morn it lay  
 Pearl-pure, and sweet as honey-dew.

## LOVE'S NUDITY

Naked this soul, for good or ill,  
 Must stand before her eyes;  
 So dear, so dread, his word and will  
 Who builded Paradise.

What if that gaze confirm my fear?  
 What if those eyes approve?  
 What if, so seen, she call me near  
 To hide me in her love?

## MIRACLES

That day you came and went faith grew  
 In miracle; one while  
 The dream swam up — was all not true?—  
 Of wondering Theophile;

Snows on the roofs, the ways, outspread;  
 But lo! the radiant boy,  
 And in heap'd arms great roses red  
 Pluck'd from God's garth of joy;

Pluck'd from God's garth of joy, and all  
 The air was one warm stream  
 Of summer. Can such things befall?  
 Or is it but a dream?

XIII

LOVE'S LAW

If it were possible to spare  
Your ears my dreaded truth,  
Fashions of friendship I might wear  
For pride perhaps or ruth.

But this is law, not choice — to lay  
My whole soul in your hand;  
My part is only to obey,  
And yours to understand.

My part to speak and there to end;  
Be you strict arbiter;  
Grant nought of all I need, my friend,  
If granting be to err.

XIV

LOVE'S ARTISTRY

Search me and know me; understand  
Sense, spirit, passion, thought:  
Yet wherefore doubt? The craftsman's hand  
Should know the thing it wrought.

Here joy has dealt with me, here pain;  
Here ran your hand, here stay'd:  
Was not a foolish carver fain  
Of his own ivory maid?

XV

CREDO QUIA IMPOSSIBILE

O silence, now all golden, what a word,  
A star, into your shadowy waters fell !  
I dare believe a shining thing I heard,  
Because impossible.

XVI

HARVEST

Wide harvest: all the plain  
Is wealth; on every tree  
Fulfilment; not in vain  
May's hope, June's prophecy.

Joy is the vintager  
Who treads the wine-press; lo !  
A great, a golden year,  
And, stamp'd, the clusters flow.

XVII

A MOMENT

Free forester of Dian's train,  
Yet swift arms girdled her about  
At one glad word: and how refrain?  
The dykes were down, the floods were out:

Life was abroad; it was not I  
Who wrought a thing I knew not of;  
It was the whole world's ecstasy  
That woke and trembled into love.

XVIII

GRIEF IN JOY

Grave joy; heaven's arch is deep  
And clear; still, still endures  
That grief although I cease to weep;  
Take it, for I am yours:

And not less pure appears  
My heaven encircling earth,  
And tenderer for that rain of tears;  
Grave joy — a sacred birth.

XIX

GIVING AND TAKING

Cross over from your side  
Of giver for my sake,  
Conceive what praises hide,  
Know once the love I take:

So faith will rest assured,  
Nor praise and wonder ache,  
Joy may be well endured,  
Cross over for my sake.

XX

THE INTERPRETER

Have I not look'd away from you ?  
When to the compass of one face  
Did I contract the revenue  
Of beauty or the springs of grace ?

But if a deeper heaven lies bare  
Now; and a more enchanted sea  
Heaves; if the lit clouds are aware;  
If the first star with mystery

Is laden; if some tremulous need  
Stirs in the midnight's brooding wings,  
Shall I not search your eyes to read  
The secret in the face of things ?

## XXI

## DECEMBER

Flowerless December, but this morn  
 Of whirling rain and ruining cloud  
 Behold ! a flower of light is born  
 By all heaven's gentleness o'erbow'd ;

Earth-born, yet scarce to earth akin ;  
 The chalice opening late ; no rose —  
 That is for youth ; yet peer within !  
 Like gold the lily-pollen glows.

## XXII

## 'I WILL'

At last achievement past gainsay ;  
 'I will' was spoken, and 'I will ;'  
 Southward we sped toward cape and bay,  
 And talk'd of cloud and stream and hill.

Pearl of great price, not bought indeed,  
 Given to my breast, I own with awe,  
 Since given where greatest was the need  
 Also for you this thing was law.

XXIII

LOVE'S SACRAMENT

Let not thy sacramental bread and wine,  
Lord Love, be found so sweet upon my lips  
That I forget the Presence, which is thine;  
Let not the lighted cloud the light eclipse.

Nay, for a joy o'erripen turns sullenness  
Or wanes; heaven's gift is over at the prime;  
Thy will it is in thine own way to bless;  
Angels descend the ladder angels climb.

XXIV

AVE ATQUE VALE

Ah Love ! When all is gain'd,  
Graces no heart can tell,  
Then first I know the attain'd  
Is unattainable.

The wave that climbs and falls  
Is still in radiant flight,  
Wind-driven, more drawn by calls  
Borne from the infinite.

Horizons ever new,  
Cries that will ne'er be mute,  
Love's welcome an adieu,  
Love's conquest a pursuit.

XXV

### THE RESTING PLACE

Where her heart throbs (come life, come death)  
I lay my hand, nor can rehearse  
The thoughts, but know that love and faith  
Are pillars of the universe.

XXVI

### IMPERSONAL

Awe fell on me: we two shall be no more  
Estrays, but still some part, whate'er ensue,  
Of the vast sea that heaves without a shore,  
Life limitless, love infinite — we two;

A sparkle in the smile of God's glad deep,  
A fruit that falls not from the unfading tree,  
A flash of colour in the bow where leap  
The sunlit torrents of eternity.

XXVII

BABBLEMENT

Once more my idle word  
Craves to possess your ear,  
All heard before, all heard  
Only once more to hear.

This endless babbling stream  
Far in the hills arose,  
Through gloom it ran and gleam,  
The chaliced rock o'erflows;

And should a slumbrous peace  
Fall on your lids, the rill  
Scarce heeds, nor yet will cease  
Because inaudible.

XXVIII

GRATITUDE

Now silence ! weighing down a steep descent  
I sink to ultimate peace in final good ;  
Below life's joyance lies this pure content,  
Where all I am is merely gratitude.

XXIX

EMBAYED

Where bliss is calm as deep  
Here let my shallop rest;  
Heaven bends above us; sleep  
Invades her sacred breast:

A mirror'd heaven below;  
O'erhead — love's infinite;  
Here would I rest, nor know  
The rapids of delight.

XXX

THE BOWMAN

No stronghold brave she gained; in one so poor  
No treasure-house; and yet I make my claim —  
Ay, proud to be the crenell'd aperture  
Through which the unerring Bowman took his aim.

And if his arrow struck the noblest heart,  
How should I be remorseful? By his grace  
Toward his high stand she glanced with sudden start,  
And through the loophole dusk beheld His face.

XXXI

GIFT ON GIFT

Love's kingdom first, a spirit divine,  
I sought and all his righteousness;  
These things are added and are mine;  
He who would bless would doubly bless.

Love's kingdom which long since I sought  
I have not left, I cannot leave;  
But in his hand the Master brought  
To Eden's bower the gracious Eve.

XXXII

THE CHAPEL

The starry chapel, where I bow  
My head in thanks or lift in praise,  
Has altars four; at each a vow  
I make, at each a hymn I raise.

Her brain: whose poignant quivering flame  
Leaps, laughs and lightens from the pyre;  
Dry logs I gathered — such my claim —  
And laid in order: hers the fire.

Her soul: not as the Scribes it spoke,  
    Sundering things real from things that seem;  
I felt the austere control; I woke,  
    And on the altar left a dream.

Her breast, Love's shrine: for very awe  
    So long, so long, I stood apart;  
Then bow'd to dread benignant law,  
    And on the coals I cast a heart.

An altar last, whose incensed air  
    Quickens the breath like wildrose wine  
Inhaled when all the land is fair,  
    And girdling heaven shows earth divine.

XXXIII

EXCHANGES

Receive my gift, Belovéd, such a dower  
    As heaven rejects not, and the breathing soil  
Offers as purest incense — your own power  
    In blissful swift recoil.

All April gleams; breeze, sunshine, shower renew  
    The earth, and skyward floats a vernal drift;  
The lit clouds sunder; see, a tenderer blue  
    Owns the reverting gift.

XXXIV

SURPRISES

The presage tells of rest, deep rest;  
Joy enters wing'd for flight;  
The clouds that pause around the West  
Are thrill'd and fill'd with light.

The presage tells of joy: such need,  
Such hope, is straight withdrawn;  
Rest, lucid rest, has Love decreed,  
The hush of earliest dawn.

XXXV

CHARITY AND KNOWLEDGE

Faith, Hope and Charity — these three,  
The greatest Charity, 'tis writ;  
But 'Trinity in Unity'  
The word wére had I utter'd it.

For what is Hope but Love that bends  
Forth in the race with quickening breath?  
And there are hours when Love ascends  
To lose and find itself in Faith.

Knowledge, 'tis written, has her place  
Lower than Love; and yet I own  
At times this seems Love's loveliest grace —  
Merely to know and to be known.

XXXVI

THE POTTER'S WHEEL

You took this fictile clay— a heart—  
    Shaped it to what you chose to make;  
Applaud a little your own art,  
    Nay, cherish for the artist's sake.

To pressure light and strict it grew,  
    Curved as the potter's hand gave law;  
Was it a chalice, wine or dew  
    Glimmering to hold, that you foresaw?

Nor think your artistry at end;  
    Still whirls the wheel— O joy and fear!—  
Mar for a moment, still to mend,  
    Fashion it unto honour, Dear.

XXXVII

THE HOLY OF HOLIES

My brave, marauding honey-bee,  
    Down the deep flower-neck you have push'd  
Your way to some dear mystery  
    Of gladness, and your hum is hush'd.

Even in a blossom's heart there lies  
An inmost chamber of the heart,  
Mystery beyond all mysteries,  
Where the last veil is drawn apart.

Found you a sun-warm'd palace there,  
A white tent where you lie enfurl'd,  
A cell, a temple, a chaste lair  
That holds the sweetness of the world?

O my wise honey-bee! such joy  
Lives not, you know, with buzz or bruit;  
Be happy in your hush'd employ;  
I pause, I ponder, and am mute.

XXXVIII

### GOLD HAIR

That glory mass'd, your girlhood's vaunt,  
The gold great hair by me unseen,  
Was it the aureole of a saint?  
Was it the rigol of a queen?

Yet here is wealth enough to bribe  
A world of hearts; take but this one  
Bright ingot sever'd from its tribe,  
This wheat-sheaf in the August sun.

## THE PITCHER

With what marmoreal grace the maid  
 Bore her brimm'd pitcher from the well,  
 One white arm curved, a hip that sway'd,  
 A foot that firmly fell.

The vessel on my shoulder set  
 Fluctuates with full felicity;  
 Add strength to bear my gladness, let  
 My burden steady me.

## TURF

Thank God for simple, honest, close-knit turf,  
 Sound footing for plain feet; nor moss, nor mire;  
 No silvery quicksand, no hot sulphurous scurf  
 Flung from a turmoil'd fire.

So far your hand has led me: what is worth  
 A question now of all the heavens conceal?  
 Here shall we lie, and better love the Earth,  
 And let the planets reel.

XLI

FONS SIGNATUS

Still the clear spirit's dignity;  
    To me love's inmost shrine reveal'd;  
Yet with no squander'd sweetness she  
    Gives largess from the fountain seal'd.

Never the blossom overblown,  
    And therefore a perpetual bride,  
For whom the spirit's loosen'd zone  
    Has worth, nor will be laid aside.

XLII

THE PLUMMET

I let my plummet sink and sink  
    Into this sea of blessing; when,  
Or where should it touch shoal? I think  
    Love lies beyond our furthest ken.

Above, the sun-smit waves career;  
    They have their voices wild and free;  
Below them, where no eye can peer,  
    Love's great glad taciturnity.

## COMMUNITY

Of all her joys the Earth has need;  
The kindly Mother finds her part  
In plumping nut, and feathering seed,  
And heart that ripens upon heart.

Her gifts to her own breast return—  
Pride of the marshall'd spears of grain,  
Passion of clouds that flush and burn,  
And love's pulsating old refrain.

With all her infants' glee is stirred  
The spirit within her, grave and sweet,  
The leap of lamb, the cry of bird,  
And hands that touch and lips that meet.

And it may be that half her store  
Of life and warmth is treasured up  
From hearts like ours, her wine that bore,  
And danced her dance, and crown'd her cup.

O blind it were to deem that we  
Are in our proper bliss inisled!  
The old Mother own'd community  
Who bended over us and smiled.

XLIV

INDULGENCES

Ah, why has Love no general store  
Wherein their merits in excess  
Of duty saints like you could pour,  
And folk like me their happiness?

Through us the sun would mount, and want  
Be lighten'd; each might have his share;  
Love's Vicar could indulgence grant  
Plenary or particular.

XLV

LOVE TOKENS

Two gifts: mere sparkling granite this;  
Why given that day my heart inquires;  
I think because in earth's abyss  
It felt the glow of central fires.

And now the earliest daffodils,  
Sun-lovers, comrades of the breeze,  
Through which earth's sudden rapture thrills,  
And spring's awaken'd ecstasies.

XLVI

BRITOMART

Smile if you will at my dear need,  
O bright-hair'd daughter of the North !  
Yes, you are stronger; but we read  
Out of the strong came sweetness forth.

With me life's proper flame aspires  
Through needs; each day new call I make  
For bread, for wine, man's heart desires;  
But Dian strength would give, not take.

Yet who was she that lay and toss'd,  
O'ercome with mighty throes of heart,  
Deep-struck, her virgin freedom lost ?  
— Not Amoret, it was Britomart.

XLVII

LOVE'S CHORD

Stand off from me; be still your own;  
Love's perfect chord maintains the sense  
Through harmony, not unison,  
Of finest difference.

See not as I see; set your thought  
    Against my thought; call up your will  
To grapple mine; gay bouts we fought,  
    Let us be wrestlers still.

Then, if we cannot choose but mate  
    And mingle wholly, it will be  
The doom of law, a starry fate,  
    And glad necessity.

#### XLVIII

### HOURS AND MOMENTS

Yes, if need were we two could dare  
    To part, and still the days were bright,  
Though less than these swift days that wear  
    Their nimbus of glad morn, glad night.

Good hours would chime upon the clock;  
    But ah, the moments ! which could be  
The wing'd keybearer that unlocks  
    The gates of immortality ?

XLIX

OLD LETTERS

Your letters flinging their good seed —  
Wit, counsel, wisdom, thought —  
Words that could shape my dream, my deed,  
I miss them, do I not ?

Yes, but how words dissect, divide  
Our truths; their swiftest play  
Hastens too slowly, strikes too wide,  
Falters or falls away.

And now our meanings, whole and sole,  
From sense to spirit outleap;  
Truth now with joy is integral,  
Deep answers unto deep.

So when speech comes to claim its share,  
We feel, all words beneath,  
Tremblings of heart oracular,  
Accords of life and death.

L

THE TRIUMPH OF LOVE

Framed in old verse Italian  
See Love in triumph charioted,  
His captives follow maid and man  
With corded wrist and bended head:

Glad children rather should be here,  
Young heirs who never felt the rod,  
Clad in the love that casts out fear,  
And freedom of the sons of God.

LI

THE BOOK OF HOURS

Blown sea-cliff, dreaming pasturage,  
The moor, broad cornland flaunting flowers,  
Each place we moved in is a page  
Of my illumined Book of Hours.

Bird, bloom and bee are in the marge,  
How fresh the tinctures, free the grace!  
But in the midst and limn'd at large  
The aureoled wonder of her face.

LII

THE COUCH

Sure resting-place above the shock  
Of waters, safe from clambering waves,  
Here be your couch, the living rock  
Lull'd by the gulphing of the caves.

I shall be human still, and feast  
My sense, your spy for brave things done:  
Hug nature you, a drowsed sea-beast,  
Slow-breathing, saturate with the sun.

## LIII

## SEA-ANEMONES

Look ! the waves' wash has reach'd this drain'd alcove :  
 Its crimson blooms retracted know at hand  
 The tidal flow ; peer now ! they thrill, they move,  
 Petals and anthers waver and expand.

'Praised, praised be God for thee,' my heart has cried,  
 'My little brother, the anemone !  
 My spirit has also heard a jubilant tide,  
 And known the blissful whelming of the sea.'

## LIV

## BURNET ROSES

On sand-dunes of this western sea  
 Here, mid the bent grass, roses shine,  
 Clear-carven, chaliced ivory,  
 Brimm'd with the summer's perfumed wine.

Never those orb'd splendours fed  
 From garden-mould, June's tended train,  
 Crimson or gold, soft-bosoméd,  
 Darted such transport to the brain.

How well with sweetness strength agrees !  
The liberal air, the spacious light,  
The sounding waves, have fashioned these;  
Take them; such things are yours by right.

LV

### SPRING IN AUTUMN

We are alone with sea and sun;  
Give the child's instinct in you play,  
And where the laughing ripples run  
Step barefoot touch'd by wind and spray;

And let me smile; the autumn day  
Mimics the springtime; seasons meet  
One moment; let my fancies stray  
With the glad ripples round your feet.

LVI

### THE PILGRIM

The sunset trance is in her eyes;  
I know the spirit's homeless flight;  
Estranged from earth, a pilgrim hies  
To seek the founts of light.

Love frames no cage, love weaves no net;  
I would not whisper a recall,  
Nor choose to capture what is yet  
Remote and virginal.

LVII

### SUNRISE

Lo! on yon eastern marge the sun:  
The waves a miracle confess,  
And awed, illumined tremors run  
Through the sea-spaces measureless.

I knew that mystery of the spear,  
The shaft of flame, the poignant ray;  
But knew not if 'twere bliss or fear  
Such seizure by the arisen day.

LVIII

### THE LOST DIAN

And if I lose your image, Dear,  
One moment in the joy of you,  
Think, the moon-marvel in the mere  
A moment since was mirror'd true:

There lay the Dian, till at once  
Thrill'd all the waters, and, behold!  
The disk is scatter'd, and there runs  
A rippled race of quivering gold.

LIX  
SECRETS

Noontide and summer; not a breeze  
Abroad, and all the landscape shines;  
Yet hush! what murmur'd mysteries!  
There sounds a going in the pines.

Our spirits, rooted firm in earth,  
Reach heavenward; not a branch astir;  
Yet secrets as of death and birth  
Are breath'd, nor crave interpreter.

LX  
CLOUDS

Hourolong today I watch'd across the plain  
The speechless intercourse of cloud and hill,  
Approaches, hushed enfoldings, and again  
Slow disengagements, sunderings soft and still.

Anon in ancient hollows, where the stream  
Tumbles, or where the pinewood climbs the steep,  
The fleecy vapours nestled as in dream,  
Separate, yet side by side like folded sheep.

Last, height and heaven were bare; no pearly flake  
But was a truant of the winnowing wind:  
What gift of strength did those pale wanderers take?  
What gift of sweetness did they leave behind?

## LXI

## SONG AND SUNSET

Tumultuous splendours in the West,  
 A brazier fuming chrysoprase,  
 Southward translucent amethyst  
 Veils mountain-capes and mountain-bays.

Extravagance of pomp ! yet still,  
 As yester-evening grey, I hear  
 The self-same robin's frugal bill  
 Pipe the same carol thin and clear.

## LXII

## NATURE'S NEED

We are two foam-flakes on a stream,  
 Two thistle-downs upon the air;  
 Yet joy is therefore not a dream;  
 Bear us, glad Power, we know not where !

The mighty Mother has a need  
 Through us to ease her blissful ache;  
 Blow, breeze, and drive the lucky seed,  
 Flow, stream, and dance the water-flake.

LXIII  
WAKING

Waking is wonder; summer airs  
Ripple the wheat-field, where a crew  
Of wing'd sweet thieves in flights, in pairs,  
Their knavish craft pursue.

They dip, lurk, eddy, swing and sway  
Upon the stalk— glad, wrangling throats;  
While silent to the wind-fleck'd bay  
Glide home the pilchard-boats.

Waking is infant joy new born;  
And how should wonder e'er be dead  
For me, who lean toward the morn  
Across so dear a head?

LXIV  
THE VILLAGE WELL

Beneath the beech-tree's dome of shade,  
Her pitcher on the coping-stone,  
There at the well the village-maid  
Sits, muses, leans and dreams alone.

She gazes down where glimmering lies  
The girdled fount, discovering there  
Those mirror'd stars which are her eyes,  
That wavering gold which is her hair.

Nor know I whether memories haunt  
These waters, or some hidden fire  
Would be allay'd, some nameless want,  
The trouble of some dim desire.

Lean, lean, Beloved, you alone,  
Here where my happiness, a well,  
Trembles, here where a face has shone  
Secluded and adorable.

Gaze yet again where glimmering lies  
The water of this fount of grace,  
And watch intent ! What if there rise  
Wavering to sight the Naiad's face !

LXV

### BLOSSOMS

Bring, bring a rose to sate the eye,  
Bring orchids for my sake,  
Wing'd like some Orient butterfly,  
And spotted like the snake.

But if I pluck a flower for you,  
Let be the imperial rose,  
Let be the blooms of vapoury mew  
Hot garden-walls inclose.

Gorse from a wild hill's golden crown,  
For plough or spade too poor;  
A hare-bell from the windy down  
Heath from the purple moor;

It must have dared to meet the gale,  
It must have loved the skies,  
Have seen great sunset glories fail,  
And watch'd the dawn arise.

LXVI

### A FAREWELL

The silver chime ! and we must part;  
Our lark shall be no nightingale:  
I go; one moment heart on heart,  
Enough for all the day's avail.

So hidden in the depth of day  
In toil, in turmoil, that must be,  
This moment will fling forth a ray  
On time from white eternity.

LXVII

NEW HORIZONS

If love were but a curious maze  
With halt at midmost, who would choose  
Swift triumph? Better Dear delays,  
And blind, bewildering avenues.

The frankness of the sea, the sky,  
Become you, you who grant the whole  
Fearless, and still the marges fly,  
And deeper heavens allure the soul.

LXVIII

PAST AND PRESENT

Those rare unearthly years of ours  
Moved on no fairer heavenlier range  
Than these of full cooperant powers,  
Yet make earth's harvest-sunshine strange

Strange that the spirit of a star  
Should stoop and enter at my door,  
Still fire and dew as when afar,  
Yet human to the ripe heart's core.

And in my soul a fount that gush'd,  
    Lucid with wandering mountain-gleams,  
In waterbreaks leap'd valeward, flush'd  
    With all its tributary streams.

LXIX

POVERTY AND PLENTY

I can remember when a child  
    I gave my fortune all away,  
Two halfpennies, for my heart was wild  
    To bless that bedesman faint and grey.

And still I see his mute appeal,  
    The craving in his eyes I see,  
Still hear his blessing and can feel  
    My leap of infant ecstasy.

Therefore I urge not— 'Tell me true,  
    Say, are you happy?' nor take thought  
Because, being wholly given to you,  
    I never yet could give you aught.

That you were rich, that I was poor,  
    And beggary all the trade I had,  
'Tis this that makes my soul secure—  
    You gave and cannot but be glad.

## WISE FOOLISHNESS

I posed you with Athene's spear,  
A virgin warrior, fancy-free;  
How could I then divine that dear  
And deep irrationality?

Fools both: you spendthrift in desire  
So poor a man as me to bless,  
And I who at my altar-fire  
Sang hymns to Wisdom's patroness.

Ah! and how swift time plies the wing;  
Here sit we Doctors in Love's school;  
So learned we know the wisest thing  
On earth is to have play'd the fool.

O wise dear foolishness! Such lore  
We grey-hair'd sages try to preach  
To youngsters now, Nay, let's give o'er,  
Our rede to them is foreign speech.

## CHILDHOOD

Her earliest love (down jealous rage!)  
Was but the King of Scotland's son,  
Crusading Kenneth; eight her age,  
My sweet, small, amorous simpleton.

Vanished the northern wizardry;  
Next Harold slain in desperate fight,  
Found by the Swan-neck (that was *she*;)   
The third, I think, Aslauga's knight.

Whereon names follow quick and thick,  
But somewhat fretted by the moth,  
Save one all gold — Theodoric!  
Tut, child, to choose an Ostrogoth!

But when the lists were set one day,  
Who like a thunderbolt bore down  
All champions, bore the prize away?  
Dear, a poor clerk in scholar's gown.

LXXII

THE RIVAL

Your rival — yes, and not an hour  
Out of my sight; be jealous now!  
The same grave face of tender power,  
The same pure lips and brooding brow.

The hair mere sunshine wefted fine;  
The eyes that look'd through life and death;  
The spirit alive in every line,  
Which grew to be my pulse, my breath.

Room in my heart must be for two,  
Nor know I which I should prefer,  
Your rival who long since was you,  
Or you proved all I dreamed of her.

LXXIII

SIXTEEN YEARS

Echoes of shawms and trumpets, Dear,  
Vibrate; this day you came to me;  
Think! now begins our sixteenth year;  
Praise, praise, and proud humility.

Think of a man assurance saves,  
Sustains yet whelms in life and limb;  
O strong salvation, all thy waves  
And billows have gone over him!

LXXIV

### TRUTHS AND TRUTH

We chased ideas years ago,  
Truths seem'd our quarry day by day;  
Has all our fire now smoulder'd low,  
The hunter's passion for his prey?

Or are we victors after strife?  
Merchants retired from rich employ?  
Does truth put on the limbs of Life,  
And wear the fervid face of Joy?

LXXV

### MADONNA

Always before me as we climb'd the height,  
Always than mine a wider, steadier view,  
Always at call a hand's grasp firm, though light,  
Till where she had stood I now was standing too.

Fain, fain to serve am I; yet be my part  
To need a refuge, claim protectiveness,  
So serving best the great Madonna-heart;  
My gift to know all blessing, hers to bless.

LXXVI

## JUSTICE

Your cry was ever 'Justice!' Did I deem  
Justice a stern-brow'd goddess, sword in hand?  
Stern-brow'd in truth, and in her eyes a gleam  
Indignant, on her lips a dread command.

Yet you have shown her with a tenderer brow,  
Sowing fair deeds, giver of cheer, of coins,  
Strict, wise, benignant; and I name her now  
'Love with the lighted lamp and girded loins.'

LXXVII

## LIBERALITY

The sun is not less free to all  
In largess, though he yield  
Some lovelier light angelical  
To yonder hillside field.

The stream has mirth for all the wild  
And all the wood, though here  
— Listen! — its laughter of a child  
Ring blithest and most clear.

Gladden the region; give away,  
To each that claims, a part;  
I grasp no miser's gold who lay  
This hand upon your heart.

LXXVIII

THE WAVE

Once more — how vain, how vain! —  
The wave breaks up the shore,  
Pale praise, unfruitful thanks again,  
And hopeless speech once more.

High as the wave may run  
It can but leave behind  
One foam-bell glittering in the sun,  
And quivering to the wind.

LXXIX

SPEECH A CLOUD

If all my words are but a cloud,  
    Half sun-suffused, half darkening you,  
And winnowing song, or low or loud,  
    Scant help to let the radiance through.

Fling down some wide aerial shaft  
    Of sunbeams, an illumined stair,  
That, past the shadowings of my craft,  
    Watchers may yet divine you there;

A stair from heaven to earth whereon  
    White Presences may come and go  
Envoys, who at Love's bidding run,  
    To breathe your name to men below.

LXXX

THE SOURCE

Live water insuppressible,  
    Upwelling new and still the same,  
Slender but lucid— who can tell  
    From what strong ribs of earth it came?

Look how the grains of yellow sand  
Are toss'd! Now stoop; with finger-tip  
Touch, or in hollow of your hand  
Bear one light ripple to your lip.

So streams have sprung that broaden free  
Past fane deep-fronted, bulwark brave;  
This will not bear an argosy;  
Enough! Egeria scoop'd the wave.

LXXXI

### THE VIOLIN

No lucky Stradivarius this!  
Poor fiddle, lacking craftsman's name;  
Yet poised, and to the bow submit,  
Some touch of music's rapture came.

Is it because your hand can win  
From every yearning thing its best?  
Is it because, glad violin,  
It lean'd and trembled toward your breast?

LXXXII

SEA-MEWS' CRIES

If we were nested with a brood,  
Safe in the fork twixt bough and bough,  
Heaven's silence or earth's quietude  
Long warblings might allow.

But sea-bird from the crag that flies  
Across the voiceful plain, or flits  
From ridge to ridge that climbs and cries,  
Such shrill swift call befits.

LXXXIII

THE NORTH WIND

A wanderer in the mist was I,  
Faltering 'mid pallid wreaths adrift,  
With naught to hope, resist, descry,  
And not a dream the cloud could lift.

You were the North wind, not for ease  
Issuing, but strength to slay despair;  
I lean'd forth, drank the quickening breeze,  
Look'd — and behold, the heaven was bare!

And whether luck it was, or grace,  
When thus I gazed around, abroad,  
Blind feet had borne me to a place  
That seem'd the very mount of God.

LXXXIV

THE RAPIDS

Where most the rapids swirl'd I lay  
Motionless in our frail canoe;  
The Indian guide whose toil seem'd play,  
Lithe oarsman at the prow, were you.

Yet what a need of practised eye,  
Of poise or turn of wrist what need,  
To shoot secure through jeopardy  
With such a breathless, quivering speed!

And ever while the oar you plied  
I knew no thought of life or death,  
Nor felt the snakelike waters glide,  
But lived in some deep heaven of faith.

LXXXV

### THE CHALLENGE

Brain challenged brain to onset fierce,  
Youth was our cartel-bearer gay,  
And desperate was the quart-and-tierce,  
But all my pride was in your play.

Honest rencounters, brain with brain;  
And yet with springing heart I viewed  
The dexterous arm that thrust amain,  
And shifting grace of attitude.

Times alter; calm the seasons move;  
Yet come, one bout! I throw my gage,  
And dare you, who can never prove  
That youth was half so blest as age.

LXXXVI

### KNOWLEDGE AND TRUTH

I circled wide, the sea-mew's way,  
Sway'd as in blissful idleness,  
Loll'd on the wave yet found my prey  
And gather'd knowledge none the less.

Pillar'd on air you tower'd, a thing  
Intense in rest, that knew nor dip  
Nor dart, but hung on vibrant wing;  
—You fell, and truth was in your grip.

## EXCHANGE OF SEX

In some strange world, ere stars were old,  
Or here ere ocean whelm'd a land,  
You were a bearded sea-king bold,  
I, a white maiden on the strand.

Strong arms compell'd her to your bark,  
Light borne for all your ring-wrought gear;  
You swept the waves from dawn to dark,  
While pride was trembling through her fear.

She half remembers in a dream  
Grey towers of her sea-eagle's nest;  
Sunshine and storm, the gloom, the gleam,  
Warmth, might, male gladness on her breast.

You had your will, and very life  
Of yours was then her cherish'd store;  
Can you recall when I was wife,  
And thoughts of yours grew babes I bore?

So now if sweet authority  
Touches, though in a different sex,  
Your love, and I approve it, why  
Should instincts from the prime perplex?

## THE STONE-BREAKER

On life's roadside I sit and break  
    Poor learning's stones for pay;  
Nor is the trade too bad, I make  
    My half-a-crown a day.

My good hour comes; 'tis past the noon,  
    And sure as sure can be  
With kerchief'd head and kilted gown  
    The mistress steps toward me;

Not slim perhaps as once she was,  
    Yet still some girlish grace,  
Not with light footing of the lass  
    But just as brave a face;

She bears the can, she bears the mug,  
    The bulging handkerchief;  
Beneath the hedge is shelter snug,  
    O hour of my relief!

And sure such bread is angels' food,  
    Such cheese heaven's honey-dew;  
Kind are the eyes as when I wooed,  
    The heart as stout and true.

So when she goes my hammer plies  
Livelier on learning's stones,  
Till home I trudge to meet her eyes,  
Maybe with aching bones.

LXXXIX

### THE NEW CIRCE

Mistress of innocent spells, your brain,  
A kindlier Circe, rules my rout  
Of thoughts and fancies. What a train  
Gather their Queen about !

Smile at their awkward gambolling  
With queenly-humorous, wise regard;  
And let them fling and spring and cling,  
Your rabble, ounce and pard.

Praise their quaint fawnings if you can,  
Or pierce at once through the disguise,  
Their thwarted gestures tell of man,  
And human are their eyes.

XC

DISCIPLINE

Your strength at first controll'd the man  
Too many an aim diverts, dilates;  
He knew constraint and swifelier ran  
As through the Danube's Iron Gates.

So 'twas in youth; your strength no less  
Confirms me now, but you assuage  
The strong control; your gentleness  
Has made me great in this my age.

XCI

EVENTIDE

'Old friends,' so have they named us, 'now grown one,  
'And twilight peace for cares will make amends,  
'Nothing so natural underneath the sun  
As such soft fading radiance for old friends.'

But we have wing'd our level western flight  
Beyond the glimmering marge, the cloud-confine,  
To heavens where peace is rapture of the light,  
And all the shoreless sea is hyaline.

## XCII

## TRANSITION

Low drops the sun, but on these sands  
 The waves still laugh and clap their hands,  
     By awe untouch'd or fear;  
 Life is for them an ecstasy,  
 Nor child nor lamb has keener cry  
     Of joy, though night be near.

But turn ! yon mountains take the light  
 Aware of transits infinite,  
     Clear-edged, intense, severe,  
 Back'd by pure spaces measureless;  
 In fortitude, submissiveness,  
     Some word of God they hear.

## XCIII

## GLOAMING

They come like shadows, so depart;  
     Theirs is the morn; the eventide  
 Is mine; life may have worn my heart;  
     They pass, and you abide.

They troop, each man his several way,  
     Expectant; I expect the night;  
 But while you sit by me and stay  
     At even time shall be light.

XCIV

IN THE STORM

The storm is on us ! How the flood  
Is whipp'd, the woodlands roar !  
Cloud topples westward over cloud,  
We'll see the sun no more.

Because we had our brave repast,  
Great light, clear airs, nor dearth  
Of life or love, we stem the blast  
And keep our faith in earth.

XCV

BETHESDA

One writes 'Your words had power to sain  
And soothe a grief'; but I, no fool,  
Know whence this virtue mastering pain,  
The secret of Bethesda's pool.

For common needs the waters lay  
Sufficient, nor would I contemn;  
Then dawn'd a high miraculous day;  
An angel came and troubled them.

XCVI

WINNINGS

That gambler, he who raked the gold,  
Each shadow'd eye a glittering spark,  
Rose calm, push'd back the curtain-fold,  
And took his way into the dark.

My gold is gift of grace, not luck,  
But if a call should sound from far,  
Back the dark curtain I could pluck,  
And front — perchance the morning-star.

XCVII

LOVE AND DEATH

If at the summons we, in sudden flight  
With equal beat and poise of wing, beneath  
Love's arm of benediction flash'd from light,  
To lose ourselves on the dark breast of Death;

Such flight were blissful close. The shadow'd face  
Might wear a smile maternal, and, arrived  
At that dim goal, a murmuring word of grace  
Might thrill the vacant air — 'These two have lived.'

XCVIII

THE BLESSED ONES

Because I am in love with life,  
Because I breathe a finer air  
Above the din and dust of strife,  
The dead have grown more fair.

Their eyes send forth a sunset beam,  
A tenderer ray on mine uplift;  
Their voices sound a twilight stream,  
This also is your gift.

XCIX

INTIMATE SORROW

Here leave me: something is your own  
By old prerogatives of blood;  
Enter the shadow and alone,  
I ask not closer neighbourhood.

Mine too the grief; but Memory fills  
A deeper chalice with your tears;  
Shootings there are and sudden thrills  
From all the half-forgotten years.

Pass through the portal dark and low,  
Single; without I keep my stand;  
Yet take from me, before you go,  
The touch of no indifferent hand.

C

LACHRYMATORIES

These lachrymatories we behold  
Were ravish'd from some sepulchre;  
Tears fell and heads were bow'd of old;  
They turn'd and Life was lawgiver.

Praise, praise and thanks, by day, by night  
Be yours, not chiefly that you laid  
Those kind assuaging hands and light  
With all strong comfort on my head;

But that within Life's radiant shrine,  
Where stands the glowing altar, where  
The flame that leaps is fed with wine,  
My vase of tears you bade me bear.

## LOVE'S LORD

When weight of all the garner'd years  
 Bows me, and praise must find relief  
 In harvest-song, and smiles and tears  
 Twist in the band that binds my sheaf;

Thou known Unknown, dark, radiant sea  
 In whom we live, in whom we move,  
 My spirit must lose itself in Thee,  
 Crying a name — Life, Light, or Love.

Think not me erst, the *loving* one,  
 That climbs his high, *loving* throne,  
 Tells all his joy, the *loving* story  
 Of his *loving* heart, and *loving* power.

Think not the *loving* one, that *loves* me,  
 From the *loving* world, and *loving* me,  
 And feel my *loving* deep, *loving* heart,  
 Through *loving* love, that *loves* me true.



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